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United Nations

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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Letter of transmittal

[6 October 2009]

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 2 of its resolution 63/26 of 26 November 2008.

The report covers the period from 7 October 2008 to 6 October 2009.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Paul **Badji**
Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Chapter I
Introduction

1. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly by its resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.

2. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report to the General Assembly[1] were endorsed by the Assembly as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports,[2] the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The recommendations of the Committee contained in its first report could not be implemented, and the Assembly each year renewed the Committee's mandate in pursuit of the tasks assigned to it.

3. The Committee has consistently supported a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine. It welcomed the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference that launched the Middle East peace process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It also welcomed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (A/48/486-S/26560, annex) and subsequent implementation agreements. The Committee has strongly supported the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders on the basis of the 1949 armistice lines, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003). The Committee welcomed and supported the Quartet's road map and called on the parties to implement it. In keeping with its mandate, the Committee continued to work towards creating conditions for successful negotiations on a permanent settlement allowing the Palestinian people to realize its inalienable rights. The Committee also promotes support and assistance by the international community to the Palestinian people.

4. The period since October 2008 was characterized by the stagnation of the political process, lack of progress in efforts to unite the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the Palestinian Authority and a worsening situation on the ground throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Of particular concern was the continuing humanitarian emergency in the Gaza Strip, exacerbated by an Israeli military offensive carried out in December 2008 and January 2009, and the continuing imposition of a severe blockade on the Gaza Strip

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/31/35).

[2] Since the thirty-first session, the Committee has submitted annual reports to the General Assembly; all such reports have been issued as supplement No. 35 of the sessional documentation of the Assembly.

which obstructed the movement of persons and goods, including humanitarian access and the import of all essential supplies.

5. The political process between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, which was resumed after the Annapolis conference of November 2007, failed to produce any tangible results and stalled once again. The Gaza ceasefire was not accompanied by an easing of the blockade and crossing points remained closed, allowing in only minimal humanitarian assistance for the 1.5 million civilians in Gaza. Israel continued to conduct military operations in the Gaza Strip, resulting in Palestinian casualties. This was met with resumed rocket and mortar fire by armed Palestinian groups into southern Israel, causing Israeli casualties and property damage. By the end of December 2008, Israel escalated the situation launching Operation Cast Lead, a large-scale military offensive with the declared goal of eliminating the threat of rocket fire on Israeli population centres. Military operations lasted for more than three weeks, killing more than 1,400 Palestinians, the majority of them civilians, including hundreds of children and women, and injuring more than 5,000 civilians. Israel reported 14 deaths, including 4 civilians, and 182 wounded. In the West Bank, the expansion of Israeli settlements, including outposts, continued, as did the construction of the wall, including in and around East Jerusalem. The number of checkpoints increased, which restricted Palestinian movement and undermined efforts to revive the economy. The Israeli army continued to carry out raids into Palestinian cities, often accompanied by the arrest and detention of Palestinians. The situation in East Jerusalem seriously deteriorated, with land confiscations, house demolitions and evictions of Palestinian residents, and the transfer of more Israeli settlers. The divide among major Palestinian factions continued to affect the lives of ordinary Palestinians, in particular in Gaza, and prevented Palestinians from uniting in support of the Palestinian Authority.

6. The international community responded to the assault on Gaza by calling for calm and respect for the lives of innocent civilians. Rocket attacks by Palestinian militants that indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilians were also condemned. The General Assembly and the Security Council met in special sessions and adopted resolutions calling for, inter alia, a permanent and durable ceasefire and the immediate provision of the necessary humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza. The Secretary-General intervened and visited Gaza immediately after the halt of hostilities. The Sharm el-Sheikh donor conference on 2 March led to pledges of about $4.5 billion for Gaza's reconstruction. In March, the Palestinian Authority presented a plan to put those funds to effective use for early recovery and reconstruction. However, the continuation of the Israeli blockade to date has prevented the start of any reconstruction, which has deepened the despair of the Palestinians and provided a fertile ground for rising extremism in Gaza. After the war, a number of investigations were conducted, including one launched by the Secretary-General to assess the damage caused to United Nations facilities in Gaza and casualties among civilians having sought refuge there and a fact-finding mission launched by the Human Rights Council.

7. The Quartet continued its efforts at achieving a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It emphasized that Arab-Israeli peace and an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the establishment of a State of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza were in the fundamental interest of the international community. It called upon Israel and the Palestinians to act on their previous agreements and obligations, in particular adherence to the road map, irrespective of

reciprocity. It acknowledged progress made by the Palestinian Authority in reforming its security sector and building its institutions and called for continued efforts to improve law and order, to fight violent extremism and to end incitement. Buttressed by the active efforts of the new United States Administration, the Quartet urged Israel to refrain from provocative actions in East Jerusalem and to freeze all settlement activity, which is deemed unlawful in accordance with international law and recognized by the international community as the biggest obstacle to achieving a permanent settlement.

8. Through its activities, the Committee sought to draw attention to the urgent need for coordinated and collective efforts to mitigate the negative developments occurring on the ground. The Committee warned repeatedly that without visible improvement in the situation on the ground, the negotiations would be doomed to fail. It supported the Gaza ceasefire and called upon Israel to lift the blockade. After the Israeli invasion of Gaza, the Committee swiftly condemned the deadly military assaults and destruction perpetrated by Israel and demanded a halt to the warfare. It also condemned rocket firing into Israel. The Committee's first international meeting in early March 2009 provided for an early opportunity to discuss the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people in Gaza and to promote and coordinate reconstruction efforts. Another meeting, held in July, pointed to the obligations of all Governments to uphold international humanitarian law. Other international meetings emphasized the urgency to implement a two-State solution, cautioning that the continuation of the Israeli policy of imposing faits accomplis on the ground posed a grave threat to the prospects for a just, peaceful and negotiated solution of the conflict. Throughout the reporting period, the Bureau of the Committee met with high-level representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, parliamentarians, civil society and the media, encouraging them to support the role and activities of the Committee and urging them to take appropriate steps in support of the implementation of the international consensus on the need to achieve a two-State solution.

Chapter II
Mandate of the Committee

9. On 26 November 2008, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (see resolution 63/26), requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat with the necessary resources to carry out its programme of work (see resolution 63/27) and requested the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat (see resolution 63/28). On the same date, the Assembly adopted resolution 63/29, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

Chapter III
Organization of work

A. Membership and officers

10. The Committee is composed of the following Member States: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

11. At its 315th meeting, on 11 February 2009, the Committee re-elected Paul Badji (Senegal) as Chairman, Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chairman and Saviour F. Borg (Malta) as Rapporteur. The Committee also elected Abelardo Moreno Fernández (Cuba) as the other Vice-Chairman. At its 317th meeting, on 17 September 2009, the Committee elected Pedro Juan Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) as Vice-Chairman, to replace Abelardo Moreno Fernández, who had been assigned by his Government to another post.

12. Also at the 315th meeting, the Committee adopted its programme of work for 2009 (see A/AC.183/2009/1).

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

13. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all United Nations Member States and observers wishing to participate in the work of the Committee as observers were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer, attended all of its meetings and made observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee and its Bureau.

14. In 2009, the Committee again welcomed as observers all States and organizations that had participated in its work in the preceding year.[3]

[3] The observers at the Committee meetings were: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, the Niger, Qatar, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam and Yemen, as well as the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Palestine.

Chapter IV
Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine

15. In pursuance of its mandate, the Committee continued to monitor the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as relevant political developments.

16. The violence in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel started to escalate when Israel killed six Hamas members in military operations in the central Gaza Strip that targeted a tunnel that the Israeli military said Hamas had been planning to use to capture Israeli soldiers. Militants in the Gaza Strip responded the following day by firing 35 Qassam rockets into southern Israel. Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the rocket fire.

17. Following the end on 19 December 2008 of the six-month ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip that had been brokered by Egypt, on 27 December 2008 the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched, without warning, their military offensive in the Gaza Strip, Operation Cast Lead, with the stated purpose of deterring further rocket attacks by Hamas against Israeli citizens. Despite the international community's repeated calls for an immediate ceasefire and respect for civilian life, the offensive continued until Israeli troops completed withdrawal from the Gaza Strip on 21 January 2009, preceded by unilateral ceasefires declared by both parties on 19 January.

18. International humanitarian organizations and other investigation missions reported that during the offensive, the Israeli forces had made extensive use of white phosphorus in residential areas, causing death and injury to civilians and extensive fire damage to property. Homes, schools, medical facilities and United Nations buildings took direct hits. Tank-fired flechette rounds were also used by Israeli forces on at least five occasions between 4 and 9 January, resulting in the deaths of several civilians.

19. During the offensive, Israeli forces routinely prevented ambulances and other vehicles from reaching the wounded or from collecting bodies anywhere near their positions. Requests by Palestinian ambulance services to be allowed passage to rescue the wounded and evacuate the dead in any area in Gaza that had been taken over by Israeli forces were consistently denied by the Israeli army. As a result, many of the wounded, who were never more than 15 minutes away from a hospital, died.

20. Several Palestinian medical facilities, including hospitals, were repeatedly hit during the bombardments, and medical staff were themselves the victims of some attacks. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the course of the operation, 16 medical personnel were killed and 26 injured while on duty. Israeli bombardments damaged or destroyed 29 ambulances. Of the 122 health facilities throughout the Gaza Strip, 58 were either damaged or destroyed by direct or indirect shelling. Of those, 15 were hospitals and 43 were primary health-care clinics.

21. As a result of the offensive, 1,409 Palestinians were killed, of which 237 were combatants and 1,172 were non-combatants. Of the 1,172 non-combatants killed, at least 342 were children and 111 were women. Some 5,000 Palestinians were injured, including many women and children, many of whom were maimed for life. According to the Government of Israel, close to 800 rockets and mortar rounds

launched from the Gaza Strip landed on Israeli territory during the operation, killing four Israeli civilians and injuring 182 others. Ten Israeli soldiers were killed during the offensive, four of them in a friendly fire incident, and 336 were injured.

22. Some 40 Palestinians were killed and many others injured at or in the vicinity of schools and a health centre run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) when they were hit by Israeli missiles, aerial bombs, artillery fire, or mortar rounds. Also, 5 UNRWA staff and 3 of its contractors were killed while on duty, and another 11 staff and 4 contractors were injured. There were four incidents during which aid convoys were shot at by Israeli forces. At least 53 United Nations buildings sustained damage.

23. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 3,540 Palestinian homes were destroyed and 2,870 homes severely damaged during the Gaza offensive. Also, 10 schools and 8 kindergartens were completely destroyed, and at least 280 others were damaged. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 164 students and 12 teachers from its schools were killed, and another 454 students and 5 teachers were injured.

24. On 12 January, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted resolution S-9/1 (A/HRC/S-9/L.1), condemning the Israeli military operation and calling for the immediate cessation of Israeli military attacks. In the same resolution, the Council decided to dispatch an independent international fact-finding mission to Gaza to investigate all violations of international human rights law during the Gaza offensive. On 3 April, the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi of Nigeria, announced his decision to appoint Richard J. Goldstone, former Chief Prosecutor of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, to lead the four-member fact-finding mission to Gaza. The team visited the Gaza Strip and also held public hearings in Geneva in June. The mission submitted its report on 15 September, in which it concluded that there was evidence indicating that serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law had been committed by Israel during the Gaza conflict, and that Israel had committed actions amounting to war crimes, and possibly crimes against humanity. The report also concluded that there was evidence that Palestinian armed groups had committed war crimes, and possibly crimes against humanity, in their repeated launching of rockets and mortars into southern Israel.

25. On 11 February, the Secretary-General appointed a United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry to review and investigate nine specific incidents that had occurred in the Gaza Strip between 27 December 2008 and 19 January 2009 and in which death or injuries had occurred at, and/or damage had been done to, United Nations premises or in the course of United Nations operations. The four-member Board was headed by Ian Martin of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. On 11 April, the Board presented its report to the Secretary-General, who on 15 May submitted a summary of the Board's findings, including its recommendations, to the Security Council (see A/63/855-S/2009/250).

26. On 30 July, the Government of Israel issued its own report on the factual and legal aspects of the operation, in which it stated, "Israel had both a right and an obligation to take military action against Hamas in Gaza to stop Hamas' almost incessant rocket and mortar attacks upon thousands of Israeli civilians and its other acts of terrorism. ... Israel has both the responsibility and the right under

international law, as does every State, to defend its civilians from intentional rocket attacks."

27. On 26 February, after a series of Egyptian-mediated reconciliation talks in Cairo, Fatah and Hamas agreed to work towards setting up a unity government, and created five joint committees on transitional Government formation, on issues of reconciliation, security, elections, and the PLO. In subsequent months, the Egyptian mediation continued. Another round of reconciliation talks was scheduled for the end of October.

28. On 2 March, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt hosted the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza. Representatives from some 80 countries and multilateral organizations welcomed the Palestinian National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza, and donors pledged some $4.5 billion for humanitarian and economic relief.

29. Israel's Gaza offensive caused the widespread destruction of homes, infrastructure and productive assets and added to an already devastating humanitarian, social and economic situation in the Gaza Strip caused by the blockade imposed by Israel on the entire territory following the Hamas takeover in June 2007. As of August, approximately 75 per cent of Gaza's population — more than 1.1 million people — were experiencing food insecurity caused by the dramatic increase in poverty, the destruction of agricultural assets and the inflation in prices of key food items. There has been a gradual shift in the diet of people in Gaza from high-cost and protein-rich foods, such as fruit, vegetables and animal products, to low-cost and high-carbohydrate foods, such as cereals, sugar and oil, which could lead to micronutrient deficiencies, in particular among children and pregnant women. In addition, over 40 per cent of Gaza's workforce, or more than 140,000 people, were unemployed. The desperate situation led to dangerous and, at times, fatal attempts to smuggle necessary goods through tunnels dug under the border with Egypt. Since 18 January, 47 Palestinians have been killed in various tunnel-related incidents.

30. Follow-up treatment for people suffering from complex injuries and permanent disabilities inflicted during the Israeli offensive has created an enormous burden for a health system weakened by the shortages of facilities, equipment and drugs caused by the blockade. In addition, patients in need of specialized treatment outside Gaza must go through an arduous and uncertain process of obtaining the necessary permits required to leave Gaza, which adds considerable anguish and stress to patients' lives and often results in denial by Israel of requests to travel for treatment and dire consequences for many patients, including several instances of fatalities.

31. The ban on the import of building materials has prevented the much-needed reconstruction of most of the damaged or destroyed houses and other infrastructure. No new construction for 7,500 planned housing units for Gaza's rapidly expanding population has been possible owing to the lack of building materials available in Gaza. More than 20,000 displaced residents are forced to continue living in rented apartments, in the houses of relatives or in tents next to the rubble of their damaged houses. A small number of families continue to live in tented camps. The lives of those displaced families have been disrupted, with children being among the worst affected.

32. Palestinian women and children suffered the most as a consequence of the Israeli occupation, in particular, during and in the wake of the military assault on Gaza. As of July, none of the 10 schools and 8 kindergartens destroyed during the Gaza offensive had been rebuilt or rehabilitated because of the lack of construction materials. Schoolchildren, thousands of whom lost family members and/or their homes, were still suffering from psychological trauma and anxiety and were in need of social support. The World Health Organization reported that the inadequate infrastructure, lack of equipment and shortage of hospital staff were contributing to the deterioration of hospital care for mothers and newborns in Gaza.

33. In fulfilment of its road map obligations, the Palestinian Authority continued efforts to restructure its security forces to assume responsibility in West Bank cities, which was met with donor appreciation. On the other hand, there has not been a significant reduction in incursions by the Israeli army into Palestinian cities or in the easing of closures in the West Bank.

34. Israeli forces have routinely conducted raids and arrests in towns and villages in the West Bank. During the reporting period, a total of 27 Palestinians, including 8 children, were killed by Israeli forces, and more than 2,900 were arrested in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, outside the context of Operation Cast Lead, some 70 Palestinians, including 7 children, were killed by Israeli forces. One Israeli soldier on patrol was killed in a bomb blast near the Gaza border.

35. On 15 December 2008, Israel released 227 Palestinian prisoners as a gesture of goodwill ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. On 23 June, Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Dr. Aziz Al-Dweik, was released after three years of detention. Ten Hamas members of the Palestinian Legislative Council were released on 2 September, while 23 others still remain in prison. In early October, Israel released 20 Palestinian women prisoners. There were no developments regarding the fate of some 11,000 other Palestinian prisoners, including children and women.

36. In the period under review, Israel continued illegal settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The occupying Power also carried out many demolitions of Palestinian homes and other infrastructure, destroyed and confiscated Palestinian-owned land and properties in order to expand existing settlements, and continued to carry out unlawful and provocative excavations in the area of Occupied East Jerusalem. In a report issued in March, an Israeli organization, Peace Now, stated that the Israeli Ministry of Construction and Housing was planning to construct 73,302 settlement units in the West Bank, 5,722 of which would be in East Jerusalem. A total of 15,156 units had been approved, 8,950 of which had already been built. If all the Ministry's plans are realized, the current total number of settlers would increase by approximately 300,000. According to a report by the Civil Administration of IDF covering the first half of 2009, there were 304,569 residents living in settlements in the West Bank, an increase of 2.3 per cent since January. This figure does not include the more than 180,000 Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem.

37. In August, Peace Now stated in its semi-annual report that construction within the settlement blocks continued as usual, despite Israel's announcement that it had stopped approving new building. According to the report, there were more than 40,000 settlement units in plans that had been approved in the past but not yet implemented, and the construction of 596 new structures had begun in the first half of 2009, 96 of which were in outposts.

38. Israeli activities to expand settlements in and expel Palestinian residents from East Jerusalem were of serious concern. On 12 December 2008, plans by the Housing Ministry and the Israel Land Administration to issue tenders in 2009 for 2,500 settlement units in Jerusalem, including 745 in the East Jerusalem settlement of Ramot, were reported. On 7 March, 88 houses were slated for demolition in the Al-Bustan neighbourhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem to make room for a park. On 19 March, the Israeli Mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, said that he would press forward with a plan to raze the entire Palestinian neighbourhood of Al-Bustan in East Jerusalem and to relocate more than 1,000 of its residents to make way for a park. On 23 March, the High Court of Justice authorized the confiscation of 30 dunams of Palestinian land in the Shu'fat neighbourhood of East Jerusalem to expand a military checkpoint.

39. On 27 April, the construction of approximately 60 new units began on a new East Jerusalem settlement in East Talpiot near the as-Sawahira neighbourhood. The expansion of that settlement would create a belt around East Jerusalem, severing it from the rest of the West Bank. On 3 May, the Israeli Minister of Internal Affairs and Shas party leader, Eli Yishai, recommended expanding Ma'ale Adumim by 12,000 dunams. The expansion would include 6,000 new units in the area between the Ma'ale Adumim and Qedar settlements. On 4 May, Minister Yishai announced plans to develop a Jewish residential area, City of David, in Jerusalem. On 2 June, it was reported that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had approved the construction of a new hotel in East Jerusalem 100 metres from the Old City walls. The plan would see the demolition of a wholesale market and a Palestinian kindergarten.

40. On 2 August, following a decision by the Israeli High Court of Justice, Israeli security forces forcibly evicted nine Palestinian families — 53 refugees registered by UNRWA, including 20 children — from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, and their property was handed over to a settlement organization. The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, issued a statement deploring those actions and stating that they were contrary to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and to the calls of the international community, including the Quartet's. On 7 September, Defence Minister Barak approved the construction of 455 new settlement units. Also on 7 September, the Israel Land Administration published tenders for the construction of 486 units in the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement.

41. There was a significant increase in settler-related violence in the West Bank, and a large number of settler attacks against Palestinian villagers were reported, such as shooting, damaging Palestinian property, uprooting of trees and burning farmland, and other forms of intimidation and harassment, including physical assault. The lack of adequate Israeli law enforcement, and even permissiveness, with regard to violent Israeli settlers remained a serious problem. In addition, two Israeli settlers, including a 13-year-old boy, were killed in Palestinian attacks during the reporting period.

42. Israel has continued to ignore the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the illegal construction of the wall on the Palestinian land it has occupied since 1967. As of July, approximately 58 per cent of the 709-kilometre-long wall was complete. A further 10 per cent was under construction, and 31.5 per cent was planned. When completed, most of the route, approximately 85 per cent, will run inside the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem. The total

area located between the wall and the Armistice Line of 1949 (Green Line), amounted to 9.5 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the "no man's land".

43. The substantial donor contributions aimed at rehabilitating the Palestinian economy have been considerably less effective than the donors had anticipated, in part because they were spent to attenuate the economic damage resulting from Israeli restrictions on Palestinian trade and movement, rather than on development projects. As of August, there were 619 closure obstacles. In September, Israel announced plans to remove 100 obstacles in the West Bank.

44. The World Bank reported in April that water withdrawals per head of the Palestinian population in the West Bank were declining and that there were real water shortages. Water withdrawals per capita for Palestinians in the West Bank are about one quarter of those available to Israelis and have declined over the last decade. There has been little progress on wastewater collection and treatment, with negative environmental results. Only four towns have wastewater treatment plants, producing poor quality effluent, and there is no planned or regulated reuse of effluent. Settlements are also discharging raw sewage into the environment.

45. As of August, some 10,000 people in northern Gaza did not have access to running water owing to the lack of available building materials to maintain and upgrade the wastewater infrastructure. As a result, 80 million litres of raw and partially treated sewage are being discharged daily into the environment. This has led to a further pollution of the sea and underground aquifer, creating serious health concerns. Only 5-10 per cent of the water extracted from Gaza's aquifer meets the safety standards of the World Health Organization. Also, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported that the underground water supplies, upon which 1.5 million Palestinians depend for agricultural and drinking water, were in danger of collapse as a result of years of overuse and contamination that had been exacerbated by the recent Israeli offensive. UNEP also reported increased salinity from salt water intrusion caused by over-abstraction of the groundwater, as well as pollution from sewage and agricultural run off. Pollution levels are such that infants in the Gaza Strip are at risk from nitrate poisoning.

46. During the Israeli offensive in Gaza, the role of UNRWA in providing assistance to refugees and supporting the delivery of critical services to non-refugees became even more vital. Over 2,300 UNRWA staff remained on active duty throughout the war to ensure the provision of basic health care and emergency relief. In addition, more than 50,000 persons were sheltered in 50 UNRWA schools across Gaza, where they received food, water, blankets, mattresses, hygiene kits and medical care from staff of the Agency and local and international non-governmental organizations. UNRWA also offered logistical and material support to the Ministry of Health and public utility providers in Gaza.

47. Following the cessation of hostilities, UNRWA scaled up its emergency programmes to meet new and emerging needs. Generous donor funding allowed the Agency to respond effectively to emergency needs, although recovery and reconstruction efforts have not been possible owing to the continued blockade of Gaza, which precipitated an unprecedented socio-economic decline.

48. As the international community marks the sixtieth anniversary of UNRWA, the Committee reiterates its sincere appreciation for the vitally important and courageous work carried out daily by UNRWA in time of hostilities.

49. The Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People of the United Nations Development Programme also responded to the destruction wrought by the Israeli military attacks in the Gaza Strip by providing food and cash assistance to victims and leading the early recovery group of United Nations agencies and civil society organizations in formulating projects to alleviate suffering in spite of the blockade of Gaza.

50. In the West Bank, the Programme of Assistance completed the construction of dozens of public buildings, including courthouses, schools and clinics, and worked with the Palestinian Authority to improve its administration. The Programme also focused on improving water management and the environment and on encouraging entrepreneurship in the poorest sectors of Palestinian society.

51. The Committee continued to express appreciation for the work of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It noted that the consolidated appeal for 2009 focused on delivering humanitarian assistance, increased protection of civilians, enhanced monitoring and reporting on the humanitarian situation and the strengthening of United Nations humanitarian coordination structures.

Chapter V
Action taken by the Committee

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 63/26

52. In pursuance of its mandate, the Committee continued to mobilize the international community in support of the Palestinian people, in cooperation with United Nations bodies, Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and others, as indicated below.

1. Action taken in the General Assembly and the Security Council

Resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly

53. The tenth Emergency Special Session on "Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory" was resumed on 15 and 16 January 2009 to discuss Israel's military aggression in the Gaza Strip, during which the Chairman of the Committee, Paul Badji, delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee. Following a two-day debate, the Special Session adopted resolution ES-10/18, which called on all parties to exert all efforts to ensure, in cooperation with the Security Council, full and urgent compliance with resolution 1860 (2009) (A/ES-10/PV.32, 33, 34, 35 and 36).

Meetings of the Security Council

54. During the period under review, the Security Council continued to monitor the situation on the ground and the efforts to implement the road map. It held monthly briefings throughout the year under the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question".

55. The monthly briefing at the Council's 6049th meeting, on 18 December 2008, was followed by an open debate, during which the Chairman of the Committee made a statement (S/PV.6049).

56. The Council held its 6061st meeting, on 6 January 2009, to discuss the crisis in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas delivered a statement, and 14 Ministers for Foreign Affairs participated in the outset of the debate. The Chairman of the Committee made a statement during the meeting resumed on 7 January (S/PV.6061 and Resumption 1). The following day, on 8 January, the Security Council held its 6063rd meeting, at which it adopted resolution 1860 (2009), calling for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire and also recalling the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative.

57. At the 6100th meeting of the Council, on 25 March, the monthly briefing was followed by an open debate, during which the Chairman of the Committee delivered a statement (S/PV.6100).

2. Action taken by the Bureau of the Committee

58. On 14 November 2008, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip (GA/PAL/1100).

59. On 31 December 2008, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement on Israel's deadly military assaults and destruction in the Gaza Strip (GA/PAL/1109).

60. On 8 January 2009, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement on the escalating violence in the Gaza Strip (GA/PAL/1110).

61. On 19 May, at its 316th meeting, the Committee adopted a statement expressing its utmost concern about illegal and provocative Israeli policies and measures in Occupied East Jerusalem (A/63/861-S/2009/265).

62. On 11 September, the Bureau of the Committee held a meeting with the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and discussed the Committee's programme of activities and the latest political developments.

63. On 5 October, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement on the situation in Occupied East Jerusalem (GA/PAL/1137).

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 63/26 and 63/27

1. Programme of international meetings and conferences

64. Through its programme of international meetings and conferences, the Committee continued to raise international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

65. In the period under review, the following international events were held under the auspices of the Committee:

(a) United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, 11 and 12 December 2008;

(b) United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, 13 December 2008;

(c) United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Cairo, 10 and 11 March 2009;

(d) United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Nicosia, 6 and 7 May 2009;

(e) Consultations of the Committee delegation with parliamentarians and other experts participating in the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Nicosia, 8 May 2009;

(f) United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting on the Question of Palestine, Jakarta, 8 and 9 June 2009;

(g) United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People, Jakarta, 10 June 2009;

(h) United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, United Nations Office at Geneva, 22 and 23 July 2009;

(i) Consultations of the Committee delegation with civil society organizations, United Nations Office at Geneva, 24 July.

66. The above-mentioned events were attended by representatives of Governments, Palestine, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations system entities, as well as representatives of civil society and the media. The reports of the meetings were issued as publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights and were made available through the "Question of Palestine" website maintained by the Division.

67. In Santiago, on the sidelines of the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, the Committee delegation was received by the President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet Jeria. It also held consultations with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alejandro Foxley Rioseco.

68. In Cairo, during the seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people, the Committee delegation met at the Egyptian's People's Assembly with Dr. Abdel Ahad Gamal El-Din, majority leader of the Egyptian People's Assembly. In separate engagements, it met with members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Minister for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs of Egypt, Moufid Mahmoud Shehab. The Committee delegation also had consultations with Suzanne Mubarak, President of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and First Lady of Egypt. It also visited the Palestine Hospital administered by the Palestine Red Crescent Society and visited Palestinian victims of the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip.

69. During its stay in Nicosia in connection with the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, the Committee delegation was received by the President of Cyprus, Dimitris Christofias. It also met separately with Marios Garoyian, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Averof Neophytou, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cypriot Parliament.

70. In Jakarta, during its stay in connection with the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting on the Question of Palestine, the Committee delegation was received by the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Triyono Wibowo. It also met with Agung Laksono, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Indonesia.

71. The Committee delegation to the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine held at the United Nations Office at Geneva used its stay in Geneva to conduct meetings and consultations with Paul Seger, Head of the Directorate for International Public Law, Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland; Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; Rudy Salles, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean; Brigitte Troyon-Borgea, Deputy Director for International Law and Cooperation, International Committee of the Red Cross; Bekele Geleta, Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

2. Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations

72. Throughout the year, the Committee continued its cooperation with the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Committee very much appreciated the active participation of their representatives in the various meetings held under its aegis. During its stay in Cairo, the Committee delegation met with Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

73. The Committee also continued its cooperation on the question of Palestine with the Presidency of the European Union (EU) and the European Commission. It appreciated the contribution of an EU expert speaker to the deliberations of the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People held in Cairo. The Bureau of the Committee met on 10 September with the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations in his capacity as representative of the Presidency of the European Union.

3. Cooperation with civil society

Civil society organizations

74. The Committee continued its cooperation with civil society organizations worldwide. Representatives of civil society participated in all meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee, including the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 24 November 2008. The meetings provided civil society representatives with an opportunity to discuss the situation on the ground and their programmes in support of the Palestinian people and to improve coordination of their activities. The Committee was appreciative of the work done by civil society organizations, encouraging them to continue contributing to efforts aimed at realizing a two-State solution.

75. The Committee maintained and developed its liaison with national, regional and international coordinating mechanisms cooperating with it, in addition to its established liaison with a large number of individual organizations. At the meeting of consultations with civil society organizations held at the United Nations Office at Geneva in July 2009, the deliberations focused on the efforts by civil society to persuade their respective Governments, in their relations with Israel and the Palestinians, to adhere to their obligations under international law, ensure respect for the Geneva Conventions and support the work of this Committee. Over the past year, the Chairman of the Committee met with representatives of civil society organizations in New York and at the meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee away from Headquarters.

76. The Division for Palestinian Rights maintained a page on the civil society network on the Question of Palestine (http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/ngo) on the "Question of Palestine" website as a tool for the exchange of information and for cooperation between civil society and the Committee.

Parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations

77. The Committee continued to attach great importance to developing its liaison with national and regional parliaments and their organizations. Its meeting in Nicosia on the theme "Action by European, Arab and other parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations for Israeli-Palestinian peace" gave new impetus to the

cooperation efforts and motivated participating parliamentarians and other experts from Europe, North America and the Arab region to work together with the United Nations and the Committee for the achievement of the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In connection with the international meetings, the delegation of the Committee held meetings in Cairo, Nicosia, Jakarta, Geneva and New York with officials of the respective national parliaments, as well as the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva, the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

78. On 29 September in New York, the Bureau of the Committee held a meeting with the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, led by its President, Rudy Salles.

4. Research, monitoring and publications

79. The Division carried out research and monitoring activities and responded to requests for information and briefings on the question of Palestine. Under the guidance of the Committee, which reiterated the relevance of the research, monitoring and publications programme, it also prepared the publications listed below for dissemination, including through the Internet:

(a) Monthly bulletin on action taken by United Nations and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;

(b) Monthly chronology of events relating to the question of Palestine, based on media reports and other sources;

(c) Reports of international meetings and conferences organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(d) Special bulletins and information notes on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(e) Periodic reviews of developments related to the Middle East peace process;

(f) Annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine.

5. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

80. Pursuant to successive annual General Assembly mandates, the Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant technical and library services of the United Nations Secretariat, continued to administer, maintain, expand and develop the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and the "Question of Palestine" website, which is located on the United Nations home page under "Peace and Security". This included the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of the technical components of the system to ensure the uninterrupted presence of UNISPAL on the Internet and involved the expansion of the document collection to include relevant new and old documents. In addition, steps continued to be taken to enhance the user-friendliness and usefulness of the system (http://unispal.un.org), including by incorporating additional multimedia content and RSS feeds intended to alert users about newly posted materials. The Division continued to work on redesigning the "Question of Palestine" website and

conducted an online survey of website users, the results of which were used to identify ways in which the system could be further improved.

6. Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority

81. Two staff members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority participated in a training programme conducted by the Division from September to December 2008, in conjunction with the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. The trainees familiarized themselves with various aspects of the work of the Secretariat and other organs and conducted research on specific topics.

7. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

82. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed at Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 24 November 2008, and at the United Nations Office at Vienna on 26 November. On the occasion of the observance at Headquarters, in addition to a special meeting of the Committee and other activities, a cultural exhibit entitled "The Palestinians: 60 years of struggle and enduring hope" was organized by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations under the auspices of the Committee. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day of Solidarity had also been observed by United Nations information centres and other bodies in many cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

83. In adopting its programme of work, the Committee decided that a similar observance of the International Day of Solidarity should be organized in 2009.

Chapter VI

Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 63/28

84. The Department of Public Information, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/28, continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine in order to raise the awareness of the international community on this question, as well as on the situation in the Middle East, in such a way as to contribute effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process.

85. UN Radio regularly covered the question of Palestine in the six official languages. Interviews, press briefings, and General Assembly and Security Council sessions were covered in programmes and posted on the UN Radio website. The international conference in Geneva organized by the Committee featured prominently in the programming of the Arabic Language Unit.

86. The United Nations News Centre, a news portal of the United Nations website, regularly highlighted issues related to the question of Palestine in the six official languages.

87. The Department organized a training programme for 10 young Palestinian journalists at Headquarters, in Washington, D.C., and in Geneva from 27 October to 5 December 2008. The programme, aimed at strengthening the participants' capacity as print media professionals, included Web training to improve their skills in maintaining websites in Arabic and finding Arabic language information on the United Nations website.

88. The Department organized two International Media Seminars on Peace in the Middle East. The seminar in 2008 was organized in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria, in Vienna, on 2 and 3 December 2008. The seminar in 2009 was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of External Relations of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, on 27 and 28 July 2009. The seminars included the participation of several journalists and experts from the respective regions, including Palestinians and Israelis. Press releases were issued on the proceedings of both seminars.

89. The Public Inquiries Unit distributed more than 1,000 copies of the publication *The Question of Palestine and the United Nations* to visitors in the six official languages.

90. A smaller-scale version of the exhibit, "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations" was produced in Arabic, English and Spanish. The Spanish and English versions were displayed, respectively, at the meetings held under the Committee's aegis in Santiago and Jakarta.

91. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued to digitize documents for the UNISPAL document collection.

92. The Department arranged a number of briefings on the Middle East issue by UNRWA and the Department of Political Affairs.

93. The network of United Nations information centres, services and offices continued to disseminate information on the question of Palestine and to organize

special outreach activities. The Information Centres actively promoted the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (29 November) and widely disseminated the messages of the Secretary-General in official and non-official languages, including Farsi, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, the Nordic languages, Portuguese and Turkish.

Chapter VII

Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

94. Throughout the reporting period, the Committee has repeatedly expressed its utmost concern about the ever-deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the breakdown of the political process. It condemned the military offensive of the Israeli military in the Gaza Strip in December 2008 and January 2009. It also denounced the firing of rockets and mortar rounds by Palestinian militants from Gaza. It has been dismayed by the continued Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, which prevents any reconstruction and sustained humanitarian assistance and which has caused the near collapse of the economy and social fabric of Gaza. The Committee remained firmly opposed to the continued illegal construction of settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. It has been particularly alarmed by the situation in Occupied East Jerusalem, the demolition of houses, the eviction of Palestinian citizens, settler extremism and the threats to Jerusalem's holy sites and historical heritage.

95. The Committee has been deeply alarmed about the Israeli military invasion of Gaza, which was accompanied by the callous disregard for civilian lives. After causing thousands of casualties among the civilian population and the massive destruction of Palestinian homes, property and infrastructure, Israel continued its suffocating blockade of the Gaza Strip. The Committee calls for the immediate lifting of the blockade. It reminds Israel that, under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the occupying Power is obliged to protect the civilian population under its occupation and to act within the ambit of international law. The Committee appeals to all the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to fulfil their obligations in accordance with common Article 1, which obligates them to respect and to ensure respect for the Convention in all circumstances. The Committee is of the view that 60 years after their entry into force, respect for the Geneva Conventions is often deficient, resulting in devastating consequences for the civilian victims of hostilities. The international community might consider strengthening respect for international humanitarian law by creating appropriate mechanisms to monitor adherence. The Committee recommends that the High Contracting Parties take, individually or collectively, the measures they deem appropriate to ensure respect for the Convention, including through the convening of a conference of the High Contracting Parties to address the subject of respect and ensuring respect for the Convention in all circumstances. The Committee will remain seized of the issue and is ready to work with Governments, intergovernmental organizations, parliamentarians, civil society and the media with a view to promoting a better understanding of the importance of the issue as it relates to the question of Palestine.

96. The Committee took note that various investigations into the warfare in Gaza had concluded that serious violations of international humanitarian law, and possibly war crimes, had been committed. The Committee commended the missions and convened a special international meeting to study their findings. At the same time, the Committee was disquieted by an almost complete denial by Israel of breaking the rules governing the conduct of war and deplored the lack of Israeli cooperation with some of the commissions. The investigations

asserted the use of illegal weapons and excessive force disproportionate to any threat that may have been faced by the army in densely populated areas. The Committee is of the view that the perpetrators of serious crimes on either side have to be brought to justice and held accountable for their actions. The recommendations contained in various reports must be implemented. The Committee urges intergovernmental organizations to respect their own guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. It also recommends that in their national legislation, parliamentarians incorporate laws allowing for the prosecution of serious violations of international humanitarian law and that inter-parliamentary organizations promote the acceptance of universal standards in that regard.

97. **The Committee is seriously concerned over Israel's ongoing settlement activity. It reiterates that the presence of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law. It calls upon Israel to immediately cease settlement activity, including construction related to so-called "natural growth", and to dismantle settlement outposts. The Committee welcomes the fact that the international community has remained focused on the damaging effects of Israel's settlement policies for the achievement of a two-State solution and calls for serious action to be taken in that regard.**

98. **The Committee is also greatly disturbed by the accelerated creation of faits accomplis in East Jerusalem, including recent policy statements and illegal unilateral measures by the Government of Israel. It reiterates that East Jerusalem is part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and that a negotiated solution of the question of Jerusalem, based on international law, is absolutely essential to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and crucial for a durable peace in the whole region. The Committee found that these concerns were widely shared by Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations, as well as by parliamentarians.**

99. **The Committee denounces the continued construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Five years after the International Court of Justice issued its landmark 9 July 2004 Advisory Opinion confirming the illegality of the construction of the wall on Palestinian land, the ruling has remained unheeded. The Committee emphasizes that, based on the Advisory Opinion, the wall cannot be viewed by Israel, or any other Government, as a permanent political boundary predetermining the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. The Committee recommends that the international community take more determined action challenging the presence of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The international community should also demand the removal of hundreds of checkpoints and other obstacles stifling the economic life in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.**

100. **The Committee notes that as a result of these detrimental developments and the continuing Israeli occupation, no progress has been achieved in the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Self-determination, independence and sovereignty have remained elusive for the Palestinian people, as has the right of return, on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), for the more than 4.6 million Palestine refugees. The Committee fully supports the international consensus that the only viable**

solution to the conflict and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights is the creation of a Palestinian State in the territory occupied by Israel in 1967, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

101. **To that end, the Committee calls for the resumption of the permanent status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. This would require a genuine commitment of the Israeli Government to a two-State solution, buttressed by tangible improvements of the situation on the ground, first and foremost, by stopping all settlement activities. The continued support by the international community is crucial for moving forward the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on all core issues. The Committee, therefore, will support all peace initiatives that have the realization of a two-State solution as their main objective.**

102. **Concerned that the divisions among the Palestinian factions profoundly affect the legitimate Palestinian national interests and aspirations for statehood and peace, the Committee calls for invigorated efforts by all to help reconcile their positions on the basis of the prevailing consensus on the need to achieve a two-State solution, which would lead to the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.**

103. **The Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights will continue, through their mandated activities, to contribute to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. They will further generate international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In this connection, the Committee emphasizes the useful and constructive contribution of the Division in support of its mandate aimed at enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. It notes with satisfaction: (a) the level of dialogue, engagement and support of the international community for its programme objectives, for instance, in terms of both participation at the meetings convened and the use of printed and electronic information materials provided by the Division; (b) the continued involvement of civil society organizations in support of the efforts of the Committee and the United Nations towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine; and (c) the increased international awareness of the United Nations policies and activities on the question of Palestine as indicated by the growing number of documents and relevant information materials on the issue accessed by users worldwide at the websites maintained by the Division. The Committee also considers that over the years the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority carried out by the Division has proved its usefulness, as it directly contributes to Palestinian capacity-building efforts. The Committee strongly recommends that this important mandated activity be continued and, where possible, enhanced.**

104. **The Committee considers that its programme of international meetings and conferences implemented by the Division contributes to focusing the attention of Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and the public on the urgency of bringing about a two-State solution and mobilizing assistance to the Palestinian people. Through its international meetings programme for 2010, the Committee intends to continue to generate**

wide support for a peaceful solution of the conflict, based on international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. In cooperation with partners in inter-parliamentary organizations, and given the importance of the issue of Jerusalem to the overall efforts at resolving the question of Palestine, the Committee will convene an international meeting on the question of Jerusalem. It will continue to engage Governments, parliamentarians and civil society to mobilize support for a just solution of the conflict. It will reach out, with the assistance of the United Nations entities on the ground, to the people most affected by the status quo, refugees and Palestinians living under occupation, as well as to members of the Israeli public, to involve them in the search for solutions, to promote dialogue and common projects and to win their backing for a settlement negotiated by their leaders and supported by the international community. The Committee wishes to contribute to efforts towards ending incitement on both sides, provide a venue for the narratives to be heard and reconciled and, with the help of civil society, to promote peace education on the ground. It will pay particular attention to the empowerment of women and their organizations in this process.

105. **The Committee commends civil society organizations for their support of the Palestinian people. It lauds the courageous advocacy actions of numerous activists, including parliamentarians, who participate in demonstrations against the wall, provide assistance to Gaza and keep their home constituencies informed about the harsh realities of life under occupation. The Committee and civil society have different roles which, through cooperation, are complementing each other. The Committee encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including that of the Committee, on the question of Palestine. It will continue to assess its programme of cooperation with civil society and consult them on ways to enhance their contribution. The Committee appreciates the support it receives from the Secretariat in strengthening cooperation with civil society.**

106. **The Committee looks forward to further developing its cooperation with parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations. Parliamentarians have a special responsibility to ensure that their Governments actively promote and support the realization of a two-State solution and ensure respect for international law, in accordance with their international obligations.**

107. **The Committee requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support; the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities, such as the further expansion and development of UNISPAL, including the graphic enhancement of the "Question of Palestine" website; the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority; and the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.**

108. **The Committee is of the view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and public opinion of the relevant issues. The Committee requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility, as warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.**

109. **Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and besetting the peace process, the Committee calls upon all States to join it in this endeavour and to extend their cooperation and support to the Committee, and invites the General Assembly again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate.**

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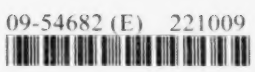

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